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Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system related to the following themes: review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Statement submitted by Femmes Afrique solidarité, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* E/2004/100 and Corr.1 and 2.

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Due to its extensive experience in African peace processes since 1996, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) developed a multidimensional approach to enhance women's role in peace processes. This approach takes advantage of women's strengths, while at the same time recognising the institutional and cultural obstacles that keep them from fully exercising their rights. It led to the following achievements:

I. At the sub-regional level

Engendering the Peace Process in West Africa: The Mano River Women's Peace Network

A FAS initiative established in May 2000, the Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) was awarded in December 2003 by the United Nations General Assembly the UN Prize in the field of Human Rights taking into account the major role this Network played in mediating among the parties to the conflict in Liberia. The Network, which includes women from Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, also has been carrying out important work to sensitise people at all levels – from grassroots organisations to politicians – on peace, especially on the Accra Peace Accords, which were signed by the women of MARWOPNET as witnesses.

In Abuja, Nigeria, FAS also facilitated the process that led to the creation of MARWOPNET in May 2000 with the support of UN agencies, the OAU, ECA and ECOWAS. FAS brought together women leaders and representatives of local NGOs, including networks of women ministers and parliamentarians, journalists, lawyers, academics, researchers, and individuals from the private sector who have demonstrated potential in the fields of peace, human rights and development to create MARWOPNET.

Despite their differences, the Mano River women agree on a common agenda on many issues related to peace and sustainable development for their countries and region. The impact of the Network was of paramount importance as it stopped the war between the three countries and brought their respective leaders back to the negotiating table. The UN Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, has recognised, in his report to the Security Council in April 2001 (S/2001/434), the positive contributions of the Mano River Women's Peace Network to peace building, and has requested donors to contribute to this initiative.

MARWOPNET was developed through FAS capacity building and advocacy programme in the Mano River region. MARWOPNET members have benefited from various training and team-building workshops organised by FAS to enhance their effective influence in the region's peace processes and advance women's empowerment.

Engendering the Peace Process in the Great Lakes Region

FAS supported women's organisations to effectively demand change in the peace process in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda. FAS engendered the Burundian peace negotiations in Arusha, Tanzania and the Inter-Congolese Dialogue by facilitating the involvement of

women who had previously participated in its civil education, advocacy and negotiation programmes. In Rwanda, FAS has a peace advocacy programme with local women's organisations.

Responding to an appeal from the women of Burundi, FAS enabled Burundian women participate in their nation's peace process by organising training workshops and advocacy missions that successfully led to the participation of 150 women in the Arusha Peace Negotiations in 1998.

With the establishment of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue - the political component of the peace process in the DRC pursuant to the 1999 Lusaka Accord - Congolese women recognised a significant opportunity to contribute to a more secure future for their country. FAS helped women to comprise 30% of the participants in this Dialogue that took place in Sun City, South Africa from February to April 2002 and resulted in the adoption of a strong Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action.

Together with several other organisations, FAS has been working at various levels to advocate lasting peace in Rwanda. The Kigali Plan of Action recognises that amongst the civilian population women are most often the victims of war, which has a negative impact on all aspects of their lives. Consequently, women must become full and equal partners in the reconstruction of post-conflict society.

FAS conducted a programme of capacity building with women's organisations in the Great Lakes region to lay the foundations for a peace initiative involving women from Burundi, the DRC and Rwanda. FAS focussed its work at the national level in order to fully enhance women's capacities before developing and implementing joint advocacy activities. In time, FAS plans to build a women's network in the sub-region similar to the Mano River Women's Peace Network.

II. At the Regional Level

Together with the African Women Committee on Peace and Development (AWPCD), FAS, began a vigorous campaign for gender mainstreaming in Africa's new continental body, the African Union. In June 2002 - a month prior to the AU opening summit - FAS convened a Strategic Consultation on Mainstreaming Gender and Women's Effective Participation in the AU in Durban, South Africa. During the two-day Consultation, participants focused on how best to exploit opportunities for gender mainstreaming during the transition from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to the AU. The Consultation culminated in the adoption of the Durban Declaration on Mainstreaming Gender and Women's Effective Participation in the AU.

The Durban Declaration was brought to the attention of the Committee of Ambassadors and other plenipotentiaries in June 2002 and the Council of Ministers of the OAU in July 2002. The Council committed itself to ensuring the mainstreaming of gender in all policies, programmes and activities of the AU and gave particular responsibility for fulfilling this commitment to the Chairperson of the AU Commission. At the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, which took place on 8 July 2002, President of Senegal put forward the recommendations of the Durban Declaration. The Assembly unanimously adopted a proposal for gender parity in the AU Commission. It is now stipulated in

Article 6 of the Statutes of the AU Commission that at least one commissioner from each region shall be a woman.

This historic move towards gender mainstreaming was applauded by the CSOs attending the Durban Consultation organised by FAS. While the organisations recognised the attention paid to women's issues and concerns, they stressed importance of ensuring the integration of women and their concerns into the AU, NEPAD and CSSDCA. The adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa was acknowledged as an important step in achieving this.

FAS organised a Conference on Mainstreaming Gender and Women's Effective Participation in the AU and NEPAD in Dakar, Senegal in April 2003. The Conference followed up on the Durban Consultation and enabled FAS to fulfil its mandate as a leading NGO in the establishment of the AU. The Dakar Conference mobilised CSOs to devise strategies for the institutionalisation of a strong mechanism of coordination to ensure civil society's active participation in decision-making processes for peace and development and to guarantee gender mainstreaming in the design and implementation of all the AU programmes and structures. To this end, the Conference adopted the Dakar Strategy. The recommendations of the Dakar Strategy were presented to President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal who used his good offices to mobilise other African Heads of State to actively promote the realisation of gender equality.

The commitment to gender mainstreaming made in July 2002 by the Council of Ministers of the OAU was implemented in July 2003 in Maputo at the second AU Summit. Equal numbers of women and men were elected to the AU Commission pursuant to the gender parity requirement in Article 6 of the Commission's Statutes. Since then, the gender parity approach has been extended to the recruitment processes of other AU bodies. Africa is the only continent in the world to have made such an obligation to gender mainstreaming within its continent-wide body.

FAS campaigned for the adoption of the Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Since the Protocol's adoption in July 2003, FAS focus has shifted towards advocating its ratification and implementation.

III. At the international level

At the international level, FAS lobbied for and embraced the adoption of Resolution 1325 by the United Nations Security Council in October 2000. In particular, FAS contributed its experiences of the effects of war on women in the Great Lakes and Mano River regions to the Security Council debate on Women, Peace and Security that led to the adoption of the resolution. Resolution 1325 acknowledges what FAS has always advocated – that war affects women differently to men, their protection is neglected and their contributions to peace building marginalised. FAS contributes to the implementation and monitoring of Resolution 1325 through the NGO-CSW Working Group on Peace, which is chaired by FAS in Geneva.

The Geneva Working Group on Peace is an initiative of Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and was co-convened with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in Geneva under the aegis of CONGO and CSW. This group now comprises 47 NGOs. In contrast to the original Working Group on Peace, which focused primarily on disarmament issues, the Working Group of 11 December 2000 is more concerned with the promotion and protection of women and girls human rights. Its mission is to examine questions related to peace from a gender perspective, specifically issues of conflict prevention, resolution, peace building, reconciliation, peace education and human security.

Through its position as chair of the Working Group on Peace, FAS contributed to the monitoring of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security. FAS through its experiences on African peace processes contributed to the Working Group and enlarged its discussions to conflict zones in others regions, such as the Middle East where FAS Executive Director, recently conducted a solidarity mission.

FAS will link its two programmes: strengthening MARWOPNET and building the Great Lakes network to its monitoring of gender parity in the African Union and of UN Resolution 1325. Since the launch of its fund for women in post-conflict areas in Geneva in May 2000, FAS has been involved in post-conflict reconstruction. It is piloting this project in the Mano River region and intends to extend it to the Great Lakes region. To strengthen these programmes, FAS is building a Regional Peace and Development Centre in Dakar, Senegal. The Centre will improve its ability to develop, encourage and advance women as agents for change and a force for peace.

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Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Statement submitted by the Association for Democratic Initiatives, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* E/2004/100 and Corr.1 and Corr.2.

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The Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI), an NGO located in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia that has been in consultative status with ECOSOC since 2003, and that was elected Sub-regional Coordinator of the UN-NGO Informal Regional Network (UN-NGO-IRENE) of Eastern Europe, developed a pilot project on "Establishment of institutional mechanisms for gender equality at local level", based on the specific needs of local municipalities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The purpose of the project was to establish in each locality a public council on gender equality and to create a pilot model of gender equality structures at local level. This also has to establish a permanent contact between three municipalities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and municipalities in Bulgaria and to institutionalize cooperation between local authorities, Members of Parliament (MPs) and NGOs in order to develop gender sensitiveness among representatives of both municipalities and women NGOs.

The public councils were established in each municipality included in the project:

- Municipality of Kisela Voda
- Municipality of Gostivar
- Municipality of Vrutok

The lack of reliable disaggregated data was a problem in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in all areas and the project focused first of all on gathering grass-root information and undertaking the necessary research on gender issues to illustrate the needs of women in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the problems they face in order to be able to carry out constructive work in this area. The Association for Democratic Initiatives has conducted one of the first sociological researches on gender issues aiming to identify the prime activities and strategic measures for improving the status and rights of women in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia according to the legislation in place.

Before the research started, ADI organized meetings in each municipality with the mayors and other representatives from the municipalities, local NGOs, representatives of the local structures of the political parties, local media and active representatives of the civil society. The main topic of these meetings was to introduce the project, to share ideas how to work together and to propose suggestions or opinions about gender equality, employment, social and economic rights, legislation on gender equality and other crucial women issues other leaders of the abovementioned municipalities in order to get their support. Aiming to have a surveying process which won't meet obstacles, their assistance was offered by contacting leaders of different institutions embraced in each municipality.

The mayors of the municipalities proposed the following institutions where the research was conducted:

- In the municipality of Gostivar: The Municipality, the Ministry of Finances, the Basic Court – Gostivar, P.E. "Komunalec" and the Primary School "Goce Delcev";
- In the municipality of Vrutok: The factory "Dekon", the Factory of glass, P.E. "Barok", the Primary School "Zlate Damjanoski" in the village of Vrutok and Raven, P/E. "Korab mermer";
- In the municipality of Kisela Voda the survey to be conducted in all ministries included in this municipality and the factory "USJE CEMENTARA" – Kisela Voda.

The results of the research on the opinion of men and women on women representation in public institutions and the political life in the three selected municipalities were analysed. The report was prepared, printed and disseminated overall municipalities, government institutions, NGOs, to the society. A number of reports have been requested by the citizen information centres within municipalities. Also the research has been presented and overseas by ADI staff Mr. Albert Musliu and Lindita Bexheti as well as by the mayors Mr. Bajram Hajrullai and Mr. Xhemail Rexhepi. It was gratefully acknowledged and supported by all public councils established in each municipality in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Vrutok, Gostivar, and Kisela Voda) and individuals.

The first cross meeting was organized in Sofia, Bulgaria and the second cross meeting thanks to the strong cooperation with the mayors, Members of Parliament (MPs), NGOs, was organized in Gostivar in the big hall of Gostivar municipality. In this Meeting were considered the number of participants and the local authorities from Bulgaria, and journalists from the national newspapers and local media covered this event. The report together with a copy of the newspapers and video tape from the local media was disseminated to the partners in Bulgaria, to the donors of the project and to the members of the public councils in the three municipalities.

One of the main activities of the project was the organization of two roundtables in each one of the three selected municipalities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Vrutok, Gostivar, Kisela Voda) characterized with ethnic diversity.

So ADI organized 6 roundtables with the participation of representatives form different structures of the public council (local authorities), MPs elected in the respective location, representatives of NGOs and also journalists from the local electronic and written media.

Besides the roundtables, the Association for Democratic Initiatives is organizing awareness meetings every month in its premises focusing on success stories on working together to change the gender balance in public institutions and political life and to establish institutional mechanisms for gender equality at local level.

This enhanced the work of the representatives of local authorities and NGOs working with women and on behalf of women, and built the capacity of the NGOs that participated in the

roundtables and project meetings. It is hoped that the involvement of these NGOs in the project activities will further improve networking and co-operative work.

These activities reinforced the relationship between the municipalities and the communities they represent, the NGO sector and the media. It is anticipated that the project will not only result in important new legislation and institutional mechanisms, but will also make the local government institutions more transparent and gender awareness.

This innovative approach was successfully implemented by ADI and helped filling the lack of legal protection for women's rights.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - a country that recently declared its readiness to start the negotiation process for Associative Membership with European Union. It is therefore of vital importance that it starts to look at its legislation in terms of gender issues, and that it becomes more gender aware and actively supportive of gender equality at all levels. Aware that the level of democracy is assessed through the position of women in it, in the future in order to advance the positive processes of equal participation of women in the social developments and to enhance the role of women at all levels (local, national, regional and international).

A wide of variety of actions including almost all of the methods available for campaign were engaged to raise the participation of women in public institutions and political life in order to empower women to go beyond the dominant political lack of interest. In this context, the role of non-governmental organizations should be fostering women's active participation in political activities with promoting the role of women in the democratic society to reaffirm its commitment to promoting positive actions for overcoming traditional stereotypes in respect of women.

The project succeeded to support and to empower women through the following main indicators:

- Their apparent interest to ADI activities
- Their interaction with ADI project staff
- Their involvement in focus groups and meetings
- Their raised awareness from campaign materials.

It is worth mentioning that as a result of the continuous efforts of ADI and other NGOs in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the efforts of many dedicated public figures and politicians as well as those of the Women's Lobby, on 26 May 2004, the Parliament of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia adopted the "Law on the Changes of the Law for Local Elections", (official gazette 35/2004). The article 18 of this Law envisages that in the forthcoming Local Elections, "30 % of the proposed city councillors should be from different gender, both in the upper and bottom part of the election lists". With this new law, a minimum of 30 % of members of the new City Councils will be women. This is not the

end of the efforts to ensure the gender balance in the local government, but it is indeed a good start and a strong motivation for ADI future work in this field.

It is predicted that such achievements will encourage women to participate in a wider extent in the democratic processes and ensure that all their rights are respected.